

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF OKEFORD FITZPAINE PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT THE PAVILION, CASTLE LANE ON TUESDAY 5th MAY 2026 7pm.

Present: Cllrs R Rowe (Chair), C Read (Vice Chair) S Harvey & G Norris

In attendance: Dorset Councillor S Murcer (SM) & Sam Smith (PC Clerk)

Apologies: Cllrs S Corben, T Hood & S Wheeler **Also present:** 4 members of the public.

1. Review of the past year: Chair Cllr RR reported the following - As we enter the third year of being elected to serve the community of Okeford Fitzpaine, this report summarises the work of Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council during 2025/26. This year, Sue Finklaire and Fred Light stood down from the parish council. We thank them for their hard work serving as councillors. In 2025/6 we gained three new parish councillors by co-option. They are Councillors Simon Wheeler, Toby Hood, and George Norris. We are supported by our amazing clerk, Sam Smith and the parish council has the General Power of Competence. The parish council is also supported by several volunteers who give time to work in the community from mowing and maintenance to small projects and litter picking, and we are grateful for that additional support.

Key Achievements in 2025/26:

During 2025/6 several projects and initiatives were achieved in Okeford Fitzpaine Parish.

- Phase two of the **Bowey Play Park** was completed. The work programme was supported by Jeremy Hunt and a group of parents. This has created a very busy play area for children and families to enjoy.
- The **Old Orchard** site on Castle Lane has been cleared and agricultural fencing installed. The hedge has been relayed by Mr Allan Frampton. A path has been laid on the inside of the hedgerow to create a safer walking route to the recreation ground.
- **20 mph speed limits** have been implemented in the village, thanks to a team of campaigners in Okeford Fitzpaine.
- In August, a team of volunteers led by Cllr Sophie Pearce cleared the waterway at Bowey, reducing flood risk. The work has led to a **drainage infrastructure team** being established to review ditches and waterways in the village.
- The **village hall car park** was resurfaced and has been significantly improved.
- Improvements have been made to **Darknoll Lane** by Dorset Council so that it is more accessible for walkers and horse riders.
- The **defibrillator** has been re-sited on the Cross which will save the parish significant sums of money in energy charges. An **additional defibrillator** has been installed at the recreation ground. Plans are in discussion regarding a third defibrillator.
- The 80th anniversary of **VE Day** was celebrated on Okeford Hill and a service was held at the war memorial for VJ 80.
- The **kitchen in the pavilion** was refurbished, making a significantly improved catering space.
- Okeford Hill had a sign installed marking its place on the **Great Chalk Way**.
- The **village shop** and post office is under new ownership after significant uncertainty over its future. We welcome Mark and Louise Beattie. Our thanks go to Sharne and Vince who have operated an excellent shop for the village and surrounding area, and we wish them every success for the future.
- The parish council requested the old **school playing field** for community use. The latest report from Dorset Council indicates the Secretary of State is in favour so the next stage of this work is to review terms and conditions before accepting ownership.
- Responses have been provided for **large planning developments** in Okeford Fitzpaine. This includes an objection to the Castle Lane site for 78 houses. We continue to work with Dorset Council to review the next stage of the Local Plan and to review the Tier 3 status of the parish.
- Work has commenced on a new **parish council website**.
- We have welcomed **new residents** into the parish, including those on the old chicken farm site.

Work that remains outstanding:

- The recreation ground slide needs an approved long-term plan
- Despite frequent attempts, Dorset Council have been unable to site a litter bin in the centre of the village.

2. Objectives for the coming year:

- Review of and redevelopment of the pavilion and recreation ground into a modern multi use facility.
- Working with Dorset Council to understand the impact of the local plan and changes in local government.
- Working with Dorset Council and other agencies to form a strategic view of the impact of large housing developments on the parish.
- Work on community spaces including the orchard site and the school playing field.
- Development of the parish website.

3. Open session/public questions: Nothing was raised.

The Chair thanked all present and closed the meeting. **END**

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record, and signed as so by the –

Chairman presiding Date: